Indonesian Shadow Puppets Teacher Resource Guide

Indonesia's iconic shadow puppetry, known as *wayang*, blends visual storytelling, music, and traditional mythology. This guide equips educators to teach the cultural significance and practical skills behind this art form and facilitate the creation of paper puppets (*wayang kertas*) to be used in the telling of the Ramayana…or any story of cultural relevance to learners.

1. Teaching Objectives

- Explore the cultural roots and traditions of wayang.
- Distinguish between Javanese and Balinese wayang
- Introduce the *Ramayana* and its characters
- Guide students in puppet creation, storytelling and collaborative performance

2. Materials

A. Puppetmaking Materials

- Printer/Scanner/Copier
- Thick Paper/Cardstock
- Wooden Sticks/Dowel Rods
- Scissors/Carving Pen Knives---------->
- Cutting Mats (if using carving pen knives)
- Hole Punch
- Brads (paper fasteners)
- Glue / Tape
- Markers/Paint/Colored Pencils

B. Storytelling & Puppet Construction Materials

- **File**: *shadow_puppets.pdf, WayangShadowPuppetResource.pdf (see appendix)*
  Links: Shadow Puppets, RCM Resource PDF
  Use: Simplified *Ramayana* narrative; Step-by-step puppet construction, Templates for key characters

- **File**: *WayangTemplates.pdf (see appendix)*
  Link: @wayang.img on Instagram
  Use: Printable templates for student puppets.

C. Music and Audiovisual Materials

- 🎵 **Gamelan Music**:
  - Baris (Balinese style)
  - Wayang Sasak Music (Lombok)
  - Traditional Gamelan

- 🎭 **Wayang Puppet Show (Live Performance)**:
  - Watch on YouTube – TEDx Shadow Puppet Performance

3. Classroom Activities & Lesson Plans

Lesson Plan 1: Introduction to Wayang

- **Objective:** Students will learn what Wayang is, recognize key characters, and understand the cultural differences between Javanese and Balinese styles.
- **Time:** 50 minutes
- **Mini-Lesson:**
  - Briefly explain that Wayang refers to Indonesia's iconic shadow puppetry, and that it blends visual storytelling, music, and traditional mythology.
  - Show the TEDx Wayang puppet video as an example.
- **Guided Practice:**
  - Review wayang characters using templates and descriptions provided below.
  - Discuss Javanese vs. Balinese Wayang using the comparison chart below.
- **Independent Practice:**
  - Students write a description of and/or sketch their favorite character and prepare to share why they choose this character with others.
- **Notes for Teachers:**
  - Emphasize respectful listening during video.
  - Ensure puppet-making materials are not accessible to students during this activity.
  - **Character Descriptions** (for use with templates):
    - **Rama** – Wise, brave prince; divine in Balinese style.
    - **Sita** – Rama's wife, symbol of devotion and sacrifice.
    - **Laksmana** – Rama's younger brother, loyal and calm warrior.
    - **Hanoman** – White monkey god; loyal, strong, can fly.
    - **Semar & Bawor/Dualen & Werdha** – Comic servants; divine in disguise.
    - **Jatayu** – Giant bird; dies protecting Sita.
    - **Rahwana** – Ten-headed demon king of Alengka.
    - **Kumbakarna** – Ravana's brother; fights with honor.
    - **Durna** – Javanese counselor; manipulative and magical.
    - **Arjuna** – Hero from *Mahabharata*; brave but sometimes arrogant.
    - **Tiwikrama** – State of immense, monstrous power.
    - **Gunungan/Tree of Life** – It's used at the beginning, transitions, and end of the Wayang Kulit performance.
  - **Javanese vs. Balinese Wayang - Key Differences:**

	Javanese Wayang	Balinese Wayang
Style	Symbolic, sacred, slower pacing	Expressive, theatrical, fast-paced
Music	Soft, fluid Javanese gamelan	Loud, dramatic Balinese gamelan
Tone	Mystical and spiritual	Lively and humorous
Language	Performed in Javanese	Performed in Balinese

Lesson Plan 2: Puppet Crafting

- **Objective:** Students will create their own Wayang-style puppets using templates and materials.
- **Time:** 50 minutes
- **Mini-Lesson:**
    - Show examples of finished puppets.
    - Explain traditional materials and function.
    - Discuss procedures for distribution and return of materials and their safe use.
- **Guided Practice:**
    - Demonstrate how to create puppets by selecting a template to print or photocopy, use a cutting knife and cutting board to cut out the pieces of the puppet, use the hole punch, brads, dowels, and tape to connect the pieces, and finally color the puppet if time allows (though it should be noted that the colors won't be seen - only the shadow!). The finished puppet should have parts that can be "articulated," or moved, to bring the puppet to life.
- **Independent Practice:**
    - Students select templates (or a design of their own) then gather needed materials to create their own character.
- **Notes for Teachers:**
    - For the safety of younger students, templates can be pre-cut.
    - Monitor the use of scissors and sharp tools to ensure student safety.

Lesson Plan 3: Shadow Theatre Performance

- **Objective:** Students will perform short Wayang-inspired scenes using their puppets.
- **Time:** 50 minutes
- **Mini-Lesson:**
    - Set the stage (a projector and whiteboard of sheet and light source suffice).
    - Explain that scenes begin and end using the Gunungan puppet.
- **Guided Practice:**
    - Assign dialogue.
    - Rehearse in pairs or small groups, with teachers guiding student decisions and confirming each pair or group is ready before the shows begin.
- **Independent Practice:**
    - Students perform their scenes for the class.
- **Notes for Teachers:**
    - Play background gamelan if available.
    - Encourage creativity, but remind students to honor Indonesian, Hindu, and their own cultures by creating respectful interpretations of the characters and the story.

Additional Extension Activities

- Cultural studies: Compare Wayang with Japanese Bunraku or Chinese shadow puppets.
- Class project: Create a group shadow theatre skit to perform for the school community.

4. Appendix

- The files referenced in the materials section above are included on the following pages.

shadow puppels

These puppets, called Wayang Kulit, are from the Indonesian island of Java. Shadow puppets are popular all over Asia. These puppets are used to tell story of the Ramayana - an epic tale from India, which is more than 2000 years old. This story is well known all over the world. It is the story of Prince Rama as he tries to rescue his wife Sita from the demon king Ravana. Rama is helped along the way by the monkey warrior Hanuman and, after a long battle, Rama defeats Ravana. He returns home, guided by the lamps of villagers across the country. This part of the story is remembered at Diwali, the Hindu festival of lights.

These types of puppet are carefully cut out of buffalo skin and then decorated with paint. Tiny holes are punched all over the puppet to create the outlines and textures of the character's clothes. The puppets are used as part of a performance that happens at night and can last for many hours. Hundreds of puppets are controlled by the Dalang (puppeteer) who moves them in front of a lamp to create shadows on a screen. The story is accompanied by music, which helps to create an atmosphere and to emphasise dramatic parts of the story.

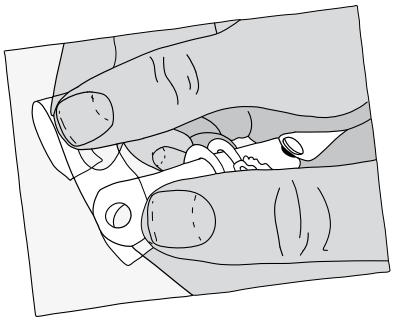
As well as the shadow puppets, there are lots of other puppets in the Museum. Can you find the Punch and Judy puppets?

how to make

you will need

tracing paper
card
sticky tape
scissors
hole punch
thin sticks bamboo skewers
colouring pencils or crayons
paper fasteners

Photocopy or trace the puppet template on to card.
Colour it in.
Cut out the puppet's body and arm pieces.

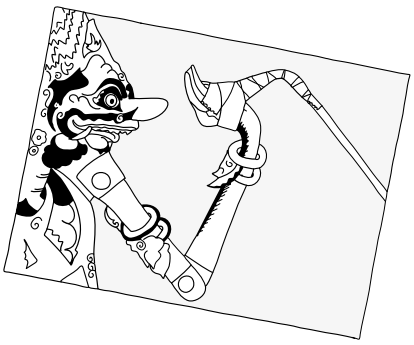


Put a piece of sticky tape around the ends of the shoulder and arm joints to keep them strong.
Punch a hole at the end of each arm joint.
Attach the arm joints together using paper fasteners. Make sure you don't make them too tight or your puppet won't move!

Stick a straw on to the back of the puppet, leaving enough sticking out at the bottom to hold on to.

Wind the sticky tape around the end of the skewer a few times, so that you have a small bundle of tape sticking out.

Attach the sticky tape bundle to the puppet's hand.
This gives your puppet's arms more flexibility to move.

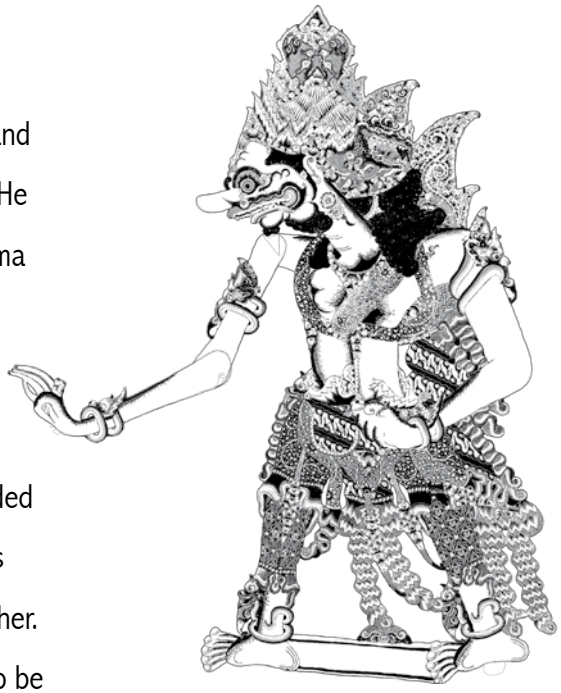


The shadow puppets have lots of tiny holes punched into them to create patterns and texture. You could do something similar using a thick embroidery needle.
Put a piece of Blu-tack on to the back of the puppet and press the needle through to make a small hole. How does that look held up to the light?

the story of the ramayana

By Becca McVean

In a country faraway a handsome prince called Rama and a beautiful princess called Sita met, fell in love and, as is the way of things, married. However, Rama's jealous stepmother soon banished the happy couple to live in the forest for fourteen years. They were joined by Rama's brother, Laksmana, who shared their simple yet contented life.



But their peace was soon to shatter. Ravana, a wicked demon king with ten heads and twenty arms, caught sight of the beautiful Sita and decided to capture her for himself. First, he had to get her alone. He ordered a servant to become a golden deer, which Sita begged Rama to catch for her. Keen to keep his wife happy, Rama set off asking Laksmana to look after Sita.

Rama's cries for help suddenly exploded from the forest. Sita pleaded with Laksmana to help her beloved Rama. Reluctantly he agreed as long as she promised to stay inside a magic circle he drew around her. And so Ravana tricked her into being alone, as he had pretended to be Rama in distress.

An old sick man came stumbling towards Sita and asked her for some water. As Sita was explaining how she had to stay inside the circle, he suddenly collapsed. The pure and gentle-hearted Sita stepped out to help him without thinking. She realised her mistake an instant later as she stood before Ravana.

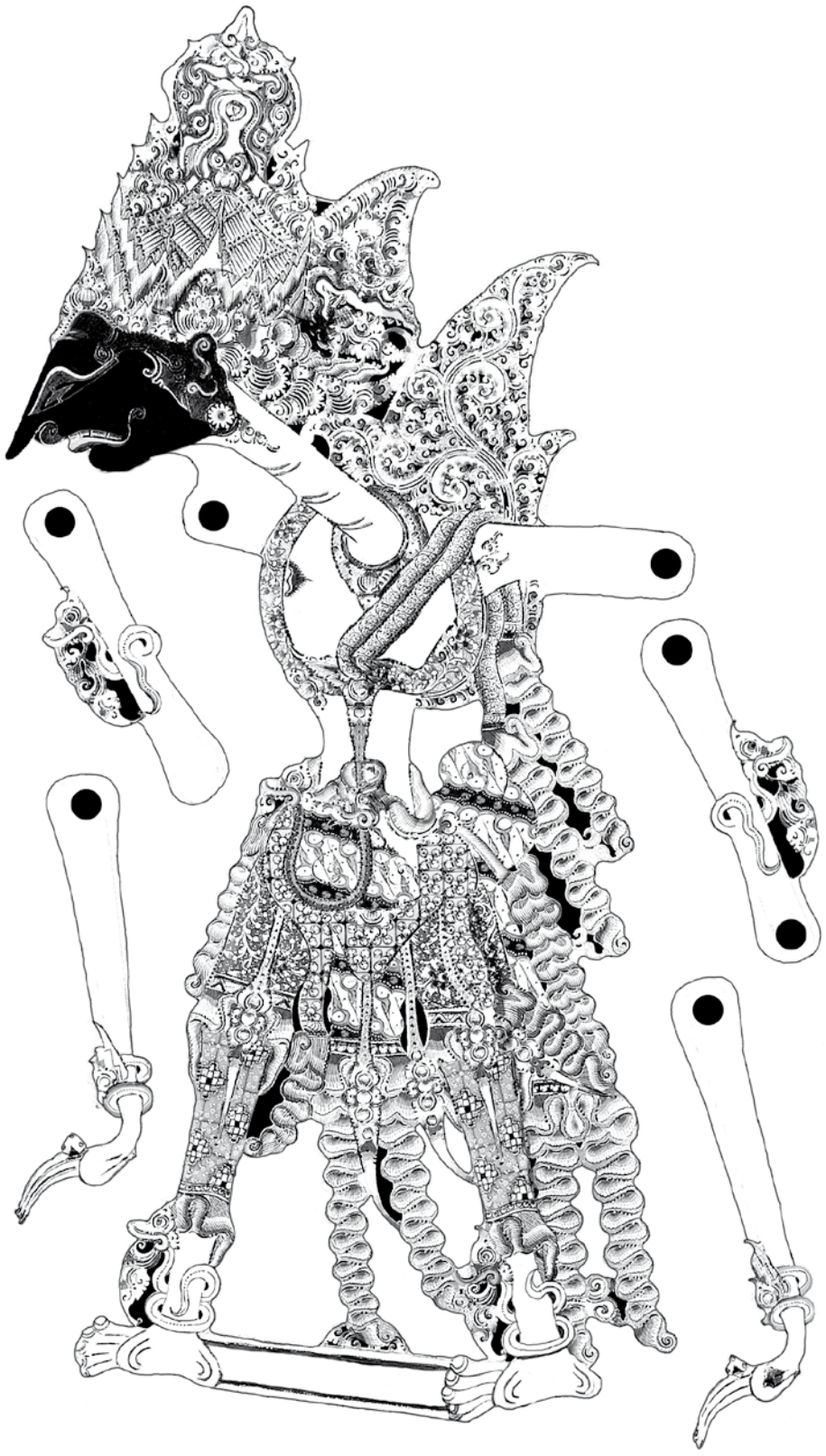
Sita screamed when she realised that his plan was to take her back to the island of Lanka in his chariot. Hearing her cries, Garuda, King of the Birds, swooped down to her rescue. But as Ravana cut off first one wing and then the other, he spun to the ground. Hearing all the noise, Rama and Laksmana came dashing back just in time for Garuda to break the devastating news of Sita's kidnap before he died.

The twists and turns of Rama's journey to get Sita back form the epic tale of the Ramayana, but his adventures are too many to tell here. Throughout his travels he had the help of the monkey warrior Hanuman and his monkey army. They built a causeway across the sea to Lanka which they travelled along to face Ravana and his demons in a mighty battle.

It is hard to fight demons who make themselves invisible and fire arrows that turn into poison-biting, breath-snatching snakes. And so the monkey army suffered. When all seemed lost Hanuman remembered there was a magical healing flower that grew on a faraway mountain. He flew there at once but became distressed as he could not find the flowers. In desperation, he lifted up the entire mountain and carried it back to the battlefield where the flowers were found and used to restore the strength of the monkey soldiers.

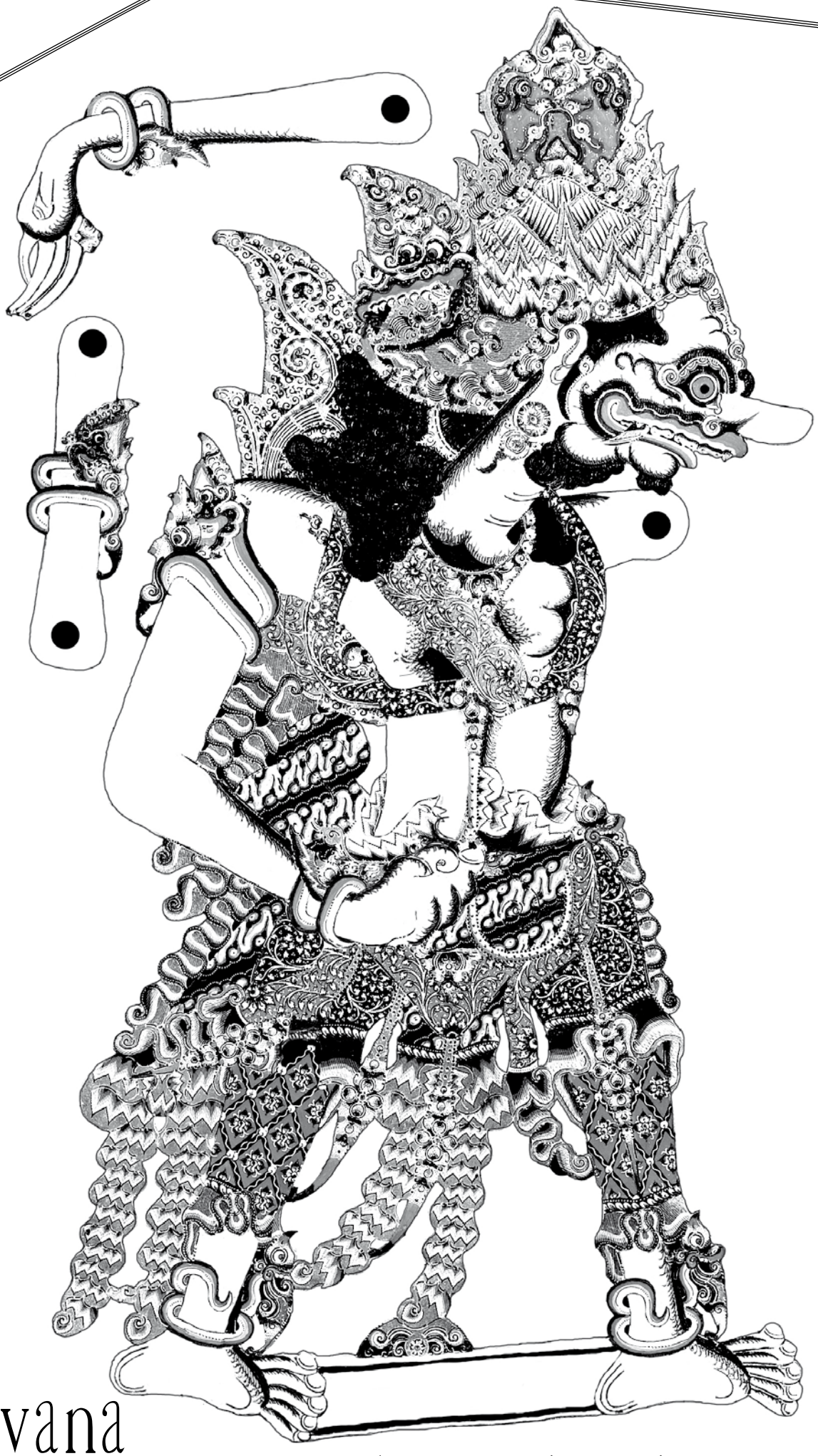
At last our hero and villain, Rama and Ravana, stood face to face. Rama was surprised that each time he cut off one of Ravana's arms or heads, it just grew back again. As long as he touched the ground, Ravana had special powers. Tiger-headed arrows roared past Rama as he sat down in the middle of the battlefield and meditated. With clearness of mind, he remembered that he had in his backpack an arrow that had been blessed by the Gods. Carefully taking aim, the arrow fired Ravana so soaringly high into the sky that he was dead by the time he came back to earth.

Rama raced off to find Sita, and on being reunited they decided to go home. Hanuman flew ahead to the villages asking them to line the paths with lamps so the couple could find their way home. It is this safe return of Rama and Sita that is celebrated every year at Diwali – the Hindu festival of lights.



Rama

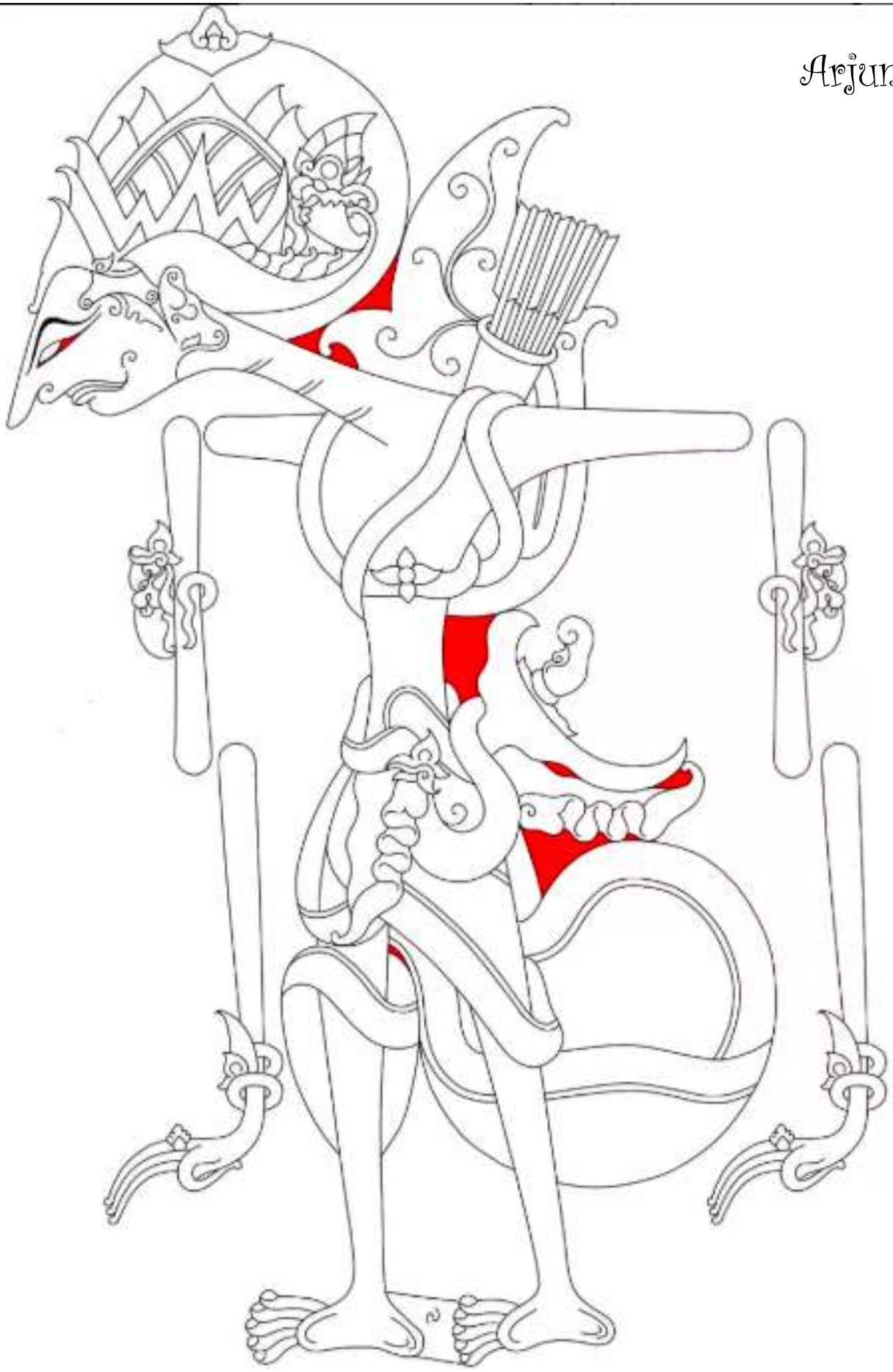
Hanuman



Ravana

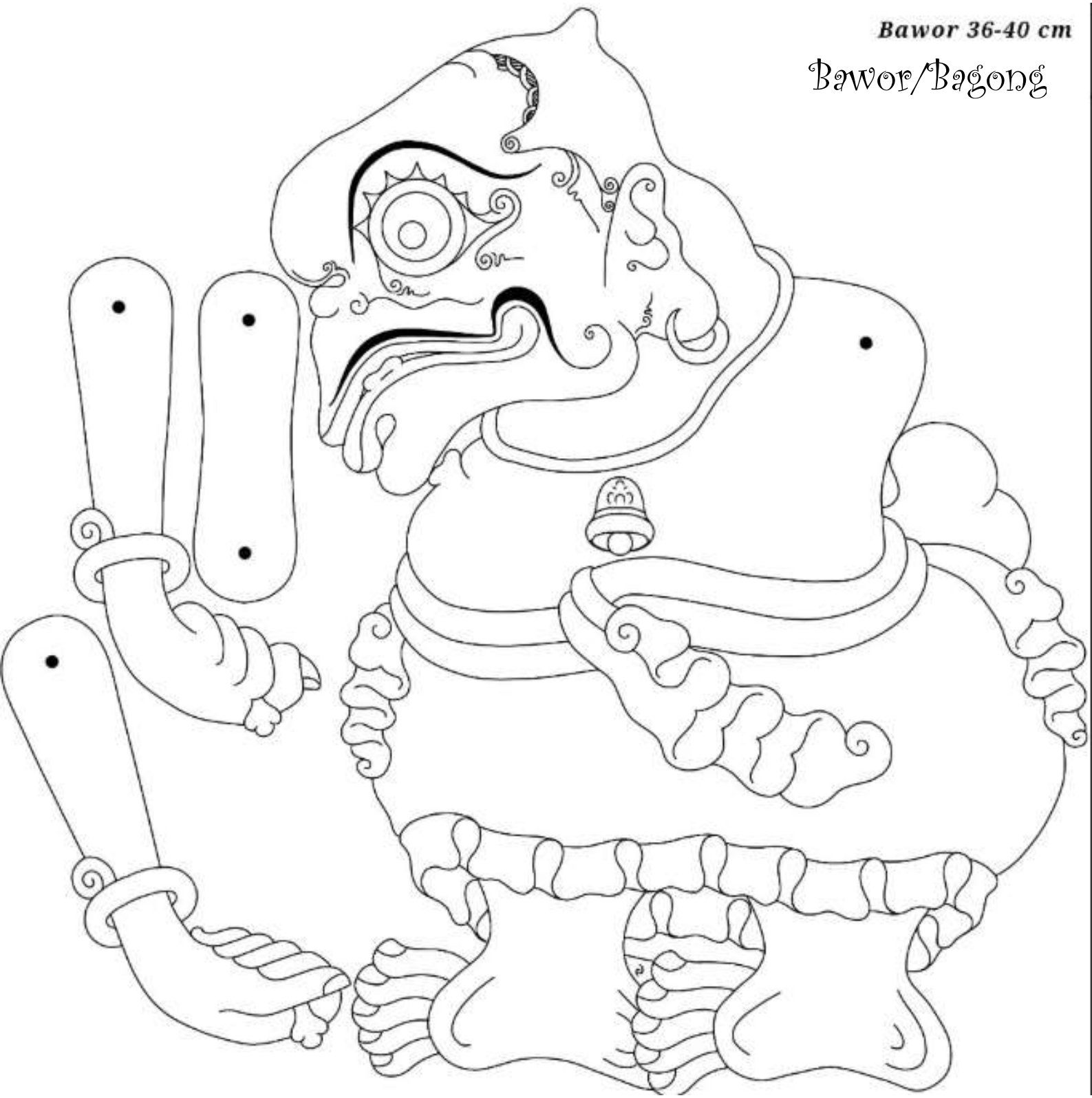
Sita

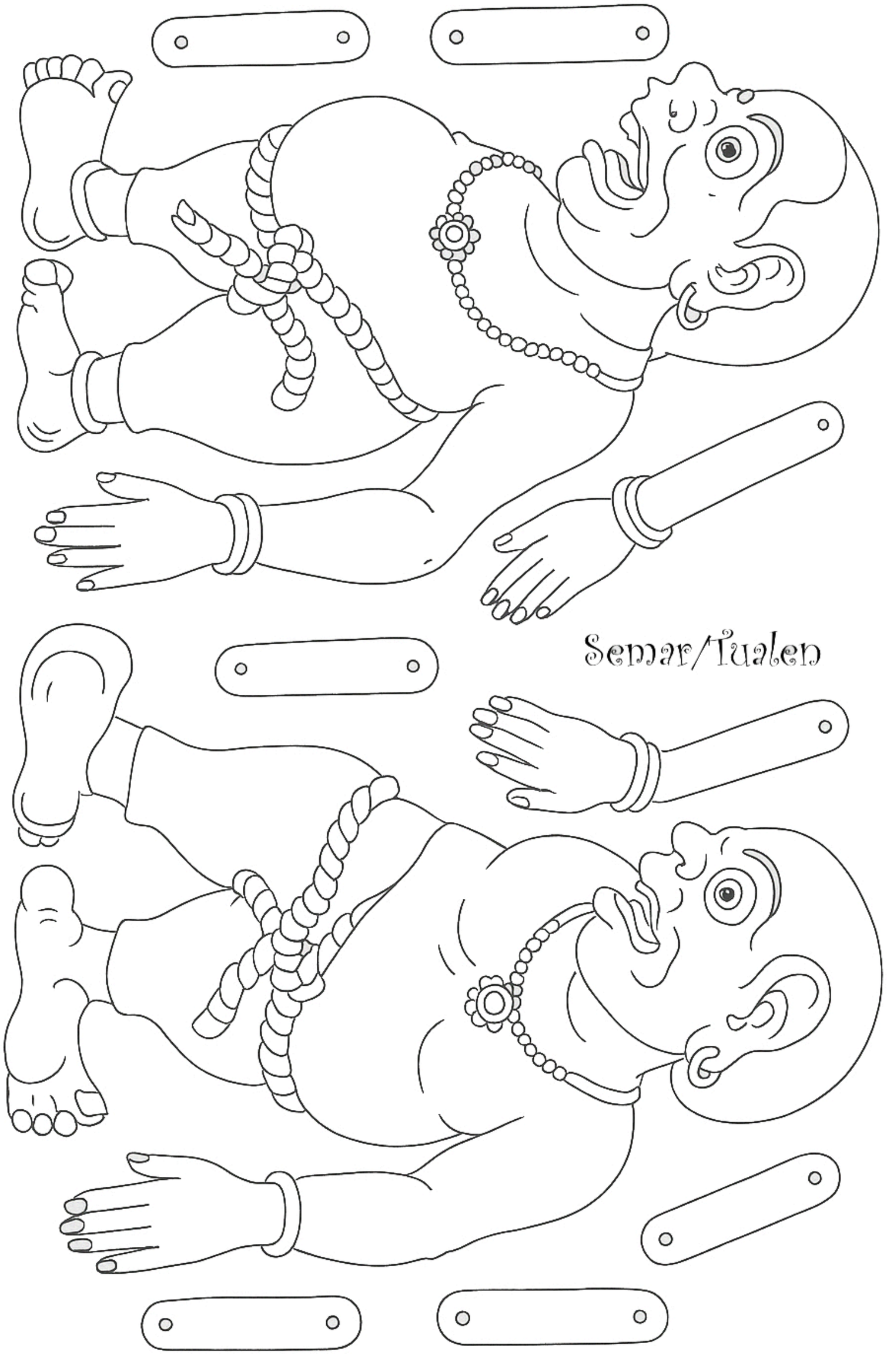
Arjuna

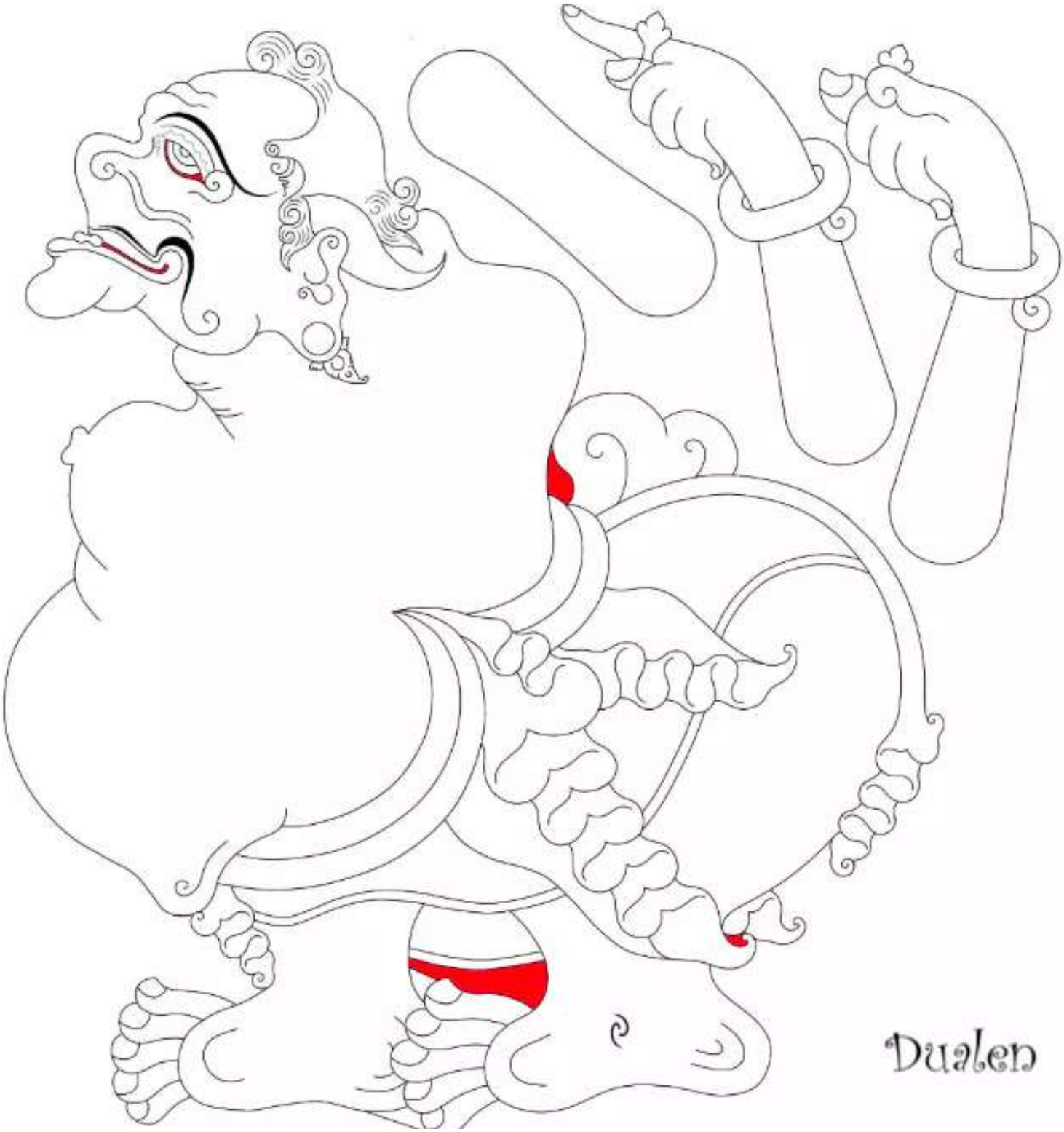


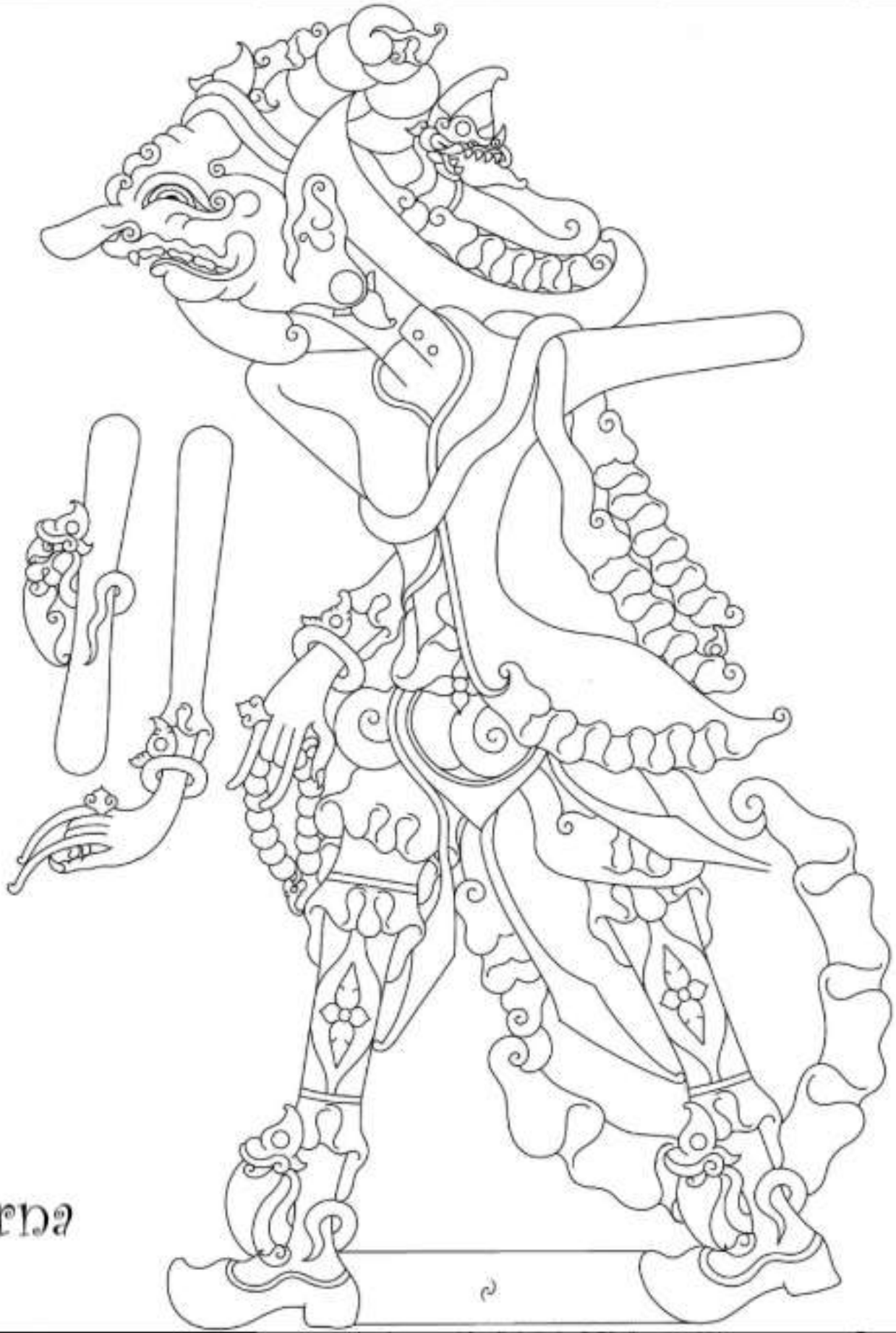
Bawor 36-40 cm

Bawor/Bagong



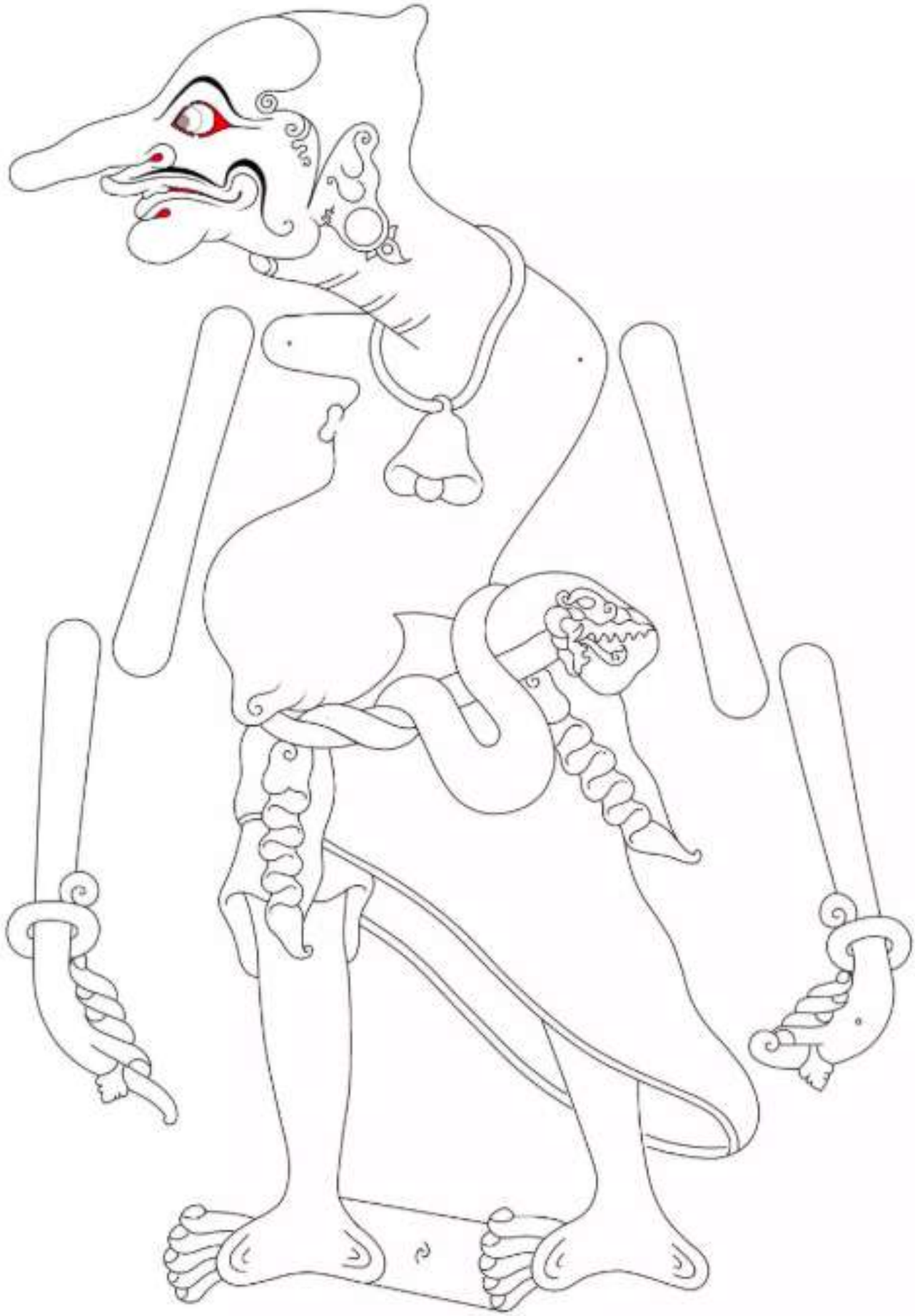

Semar/Tualen


Dualen

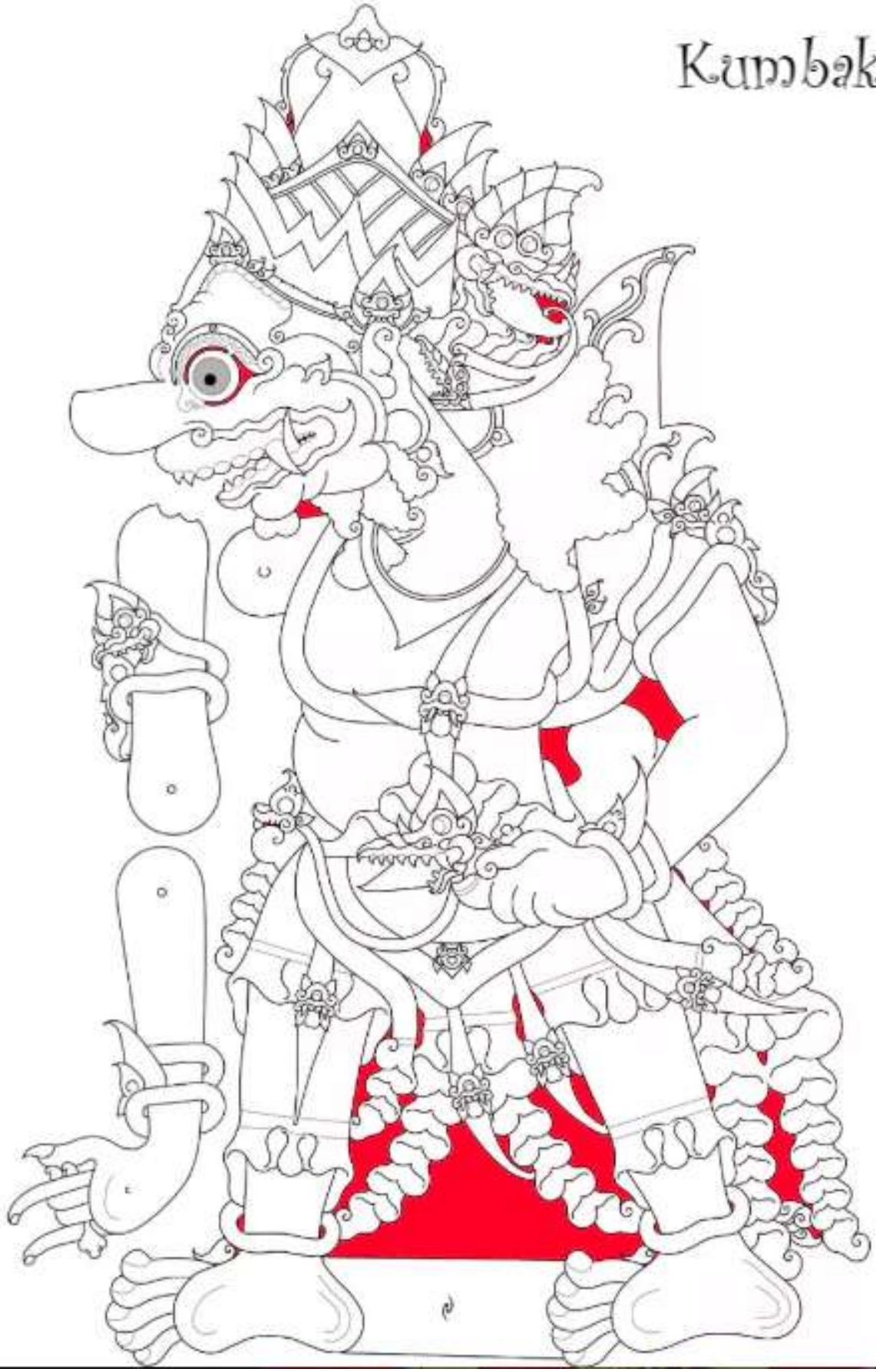


Durna

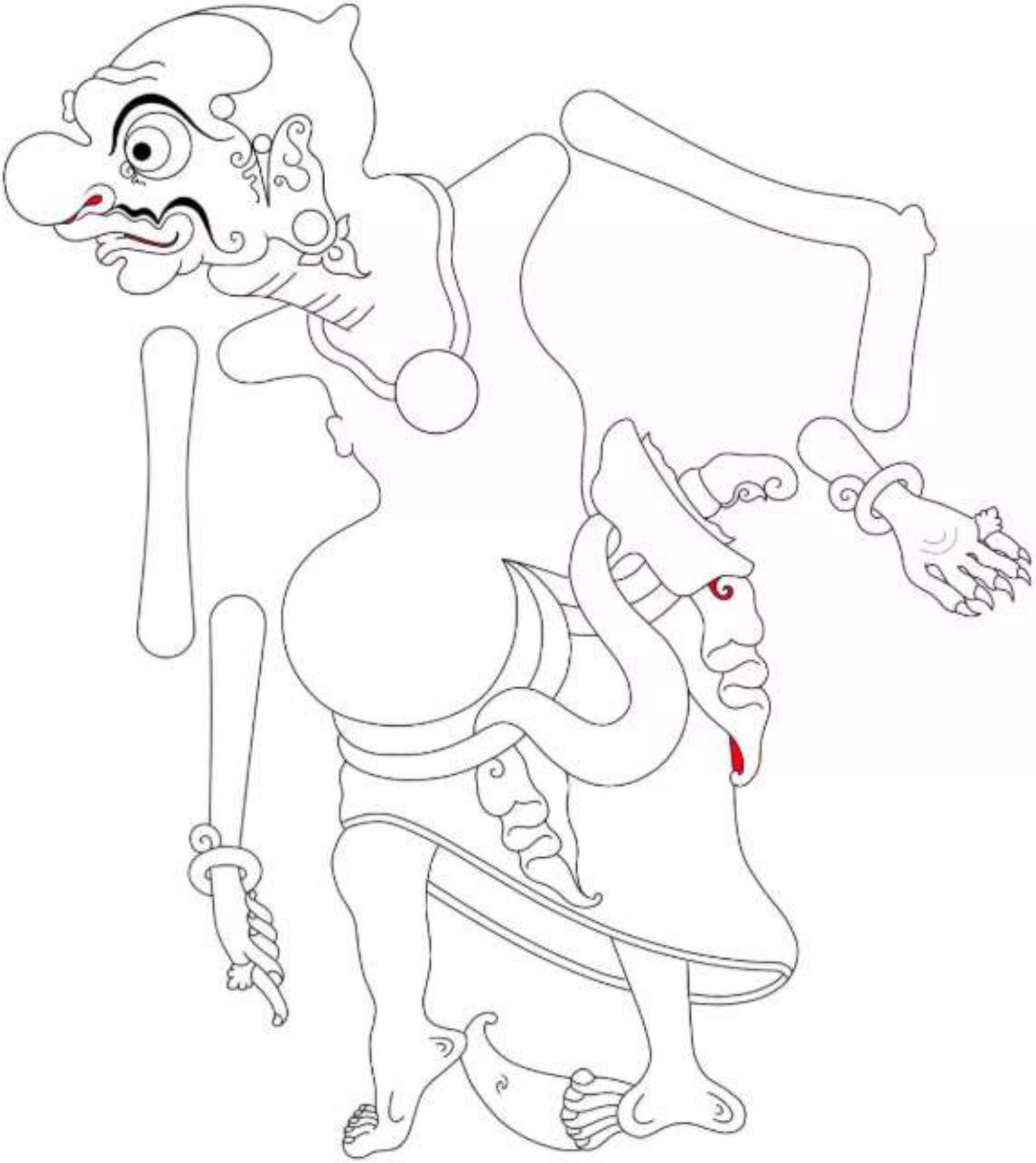
Ravana's Servant



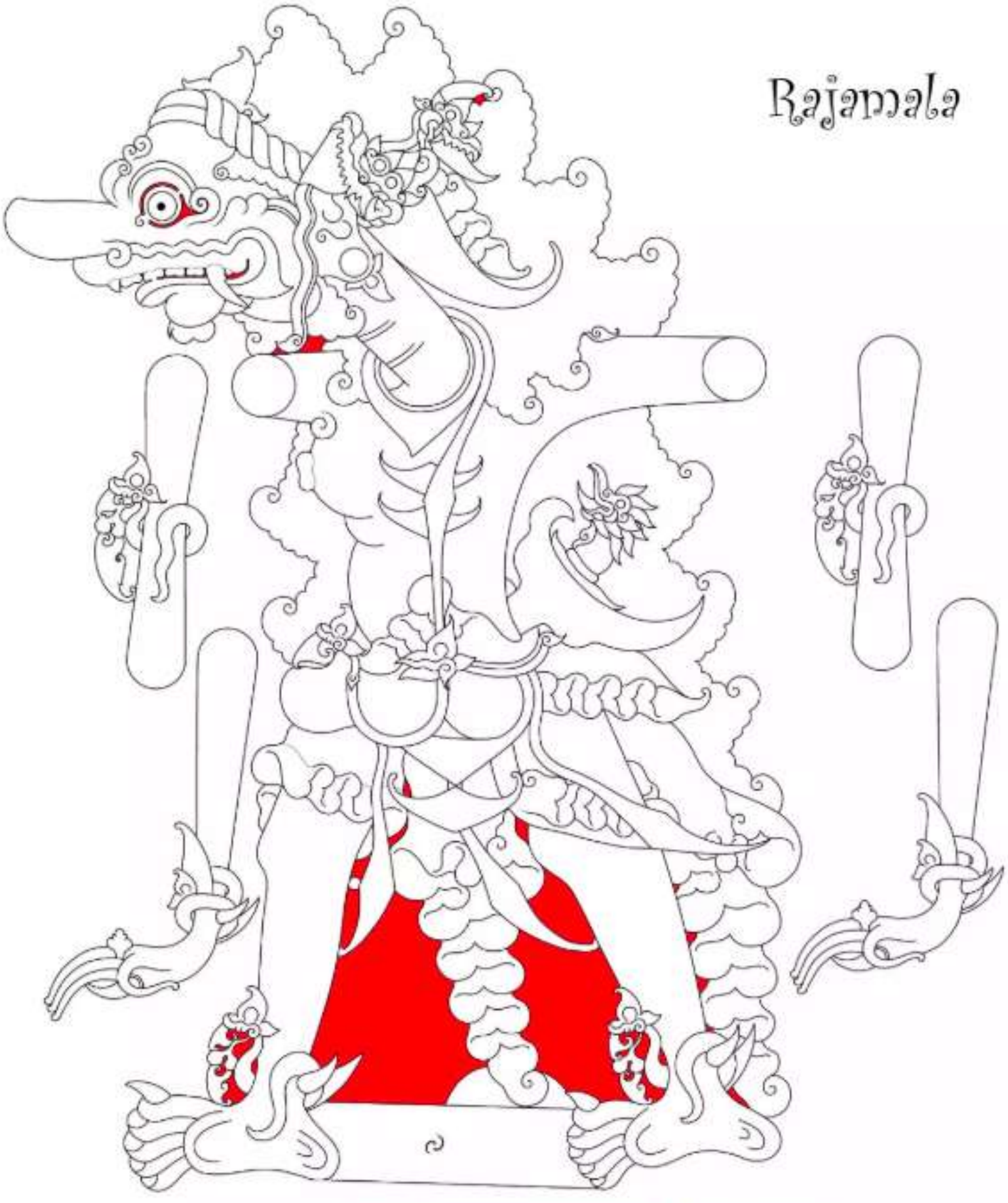
Kumbakarna



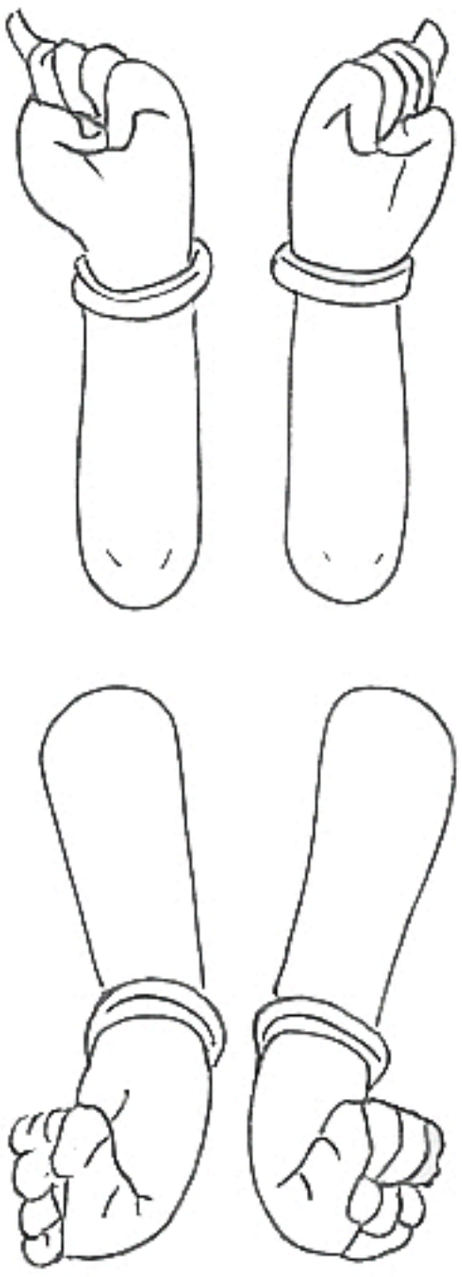
Nala Gareng

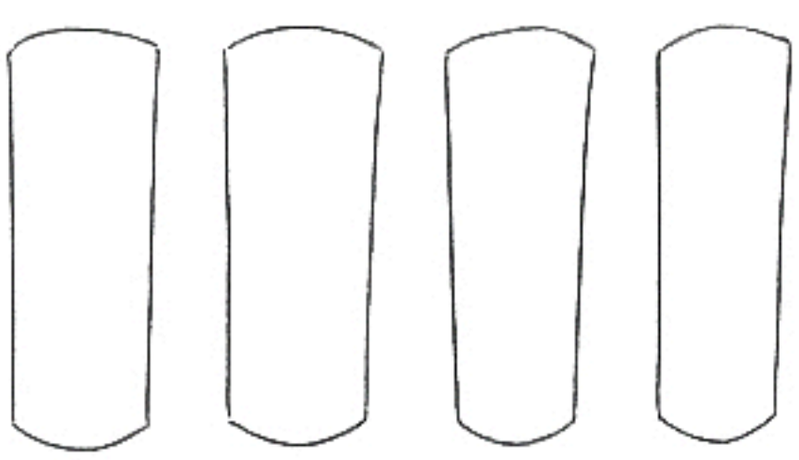


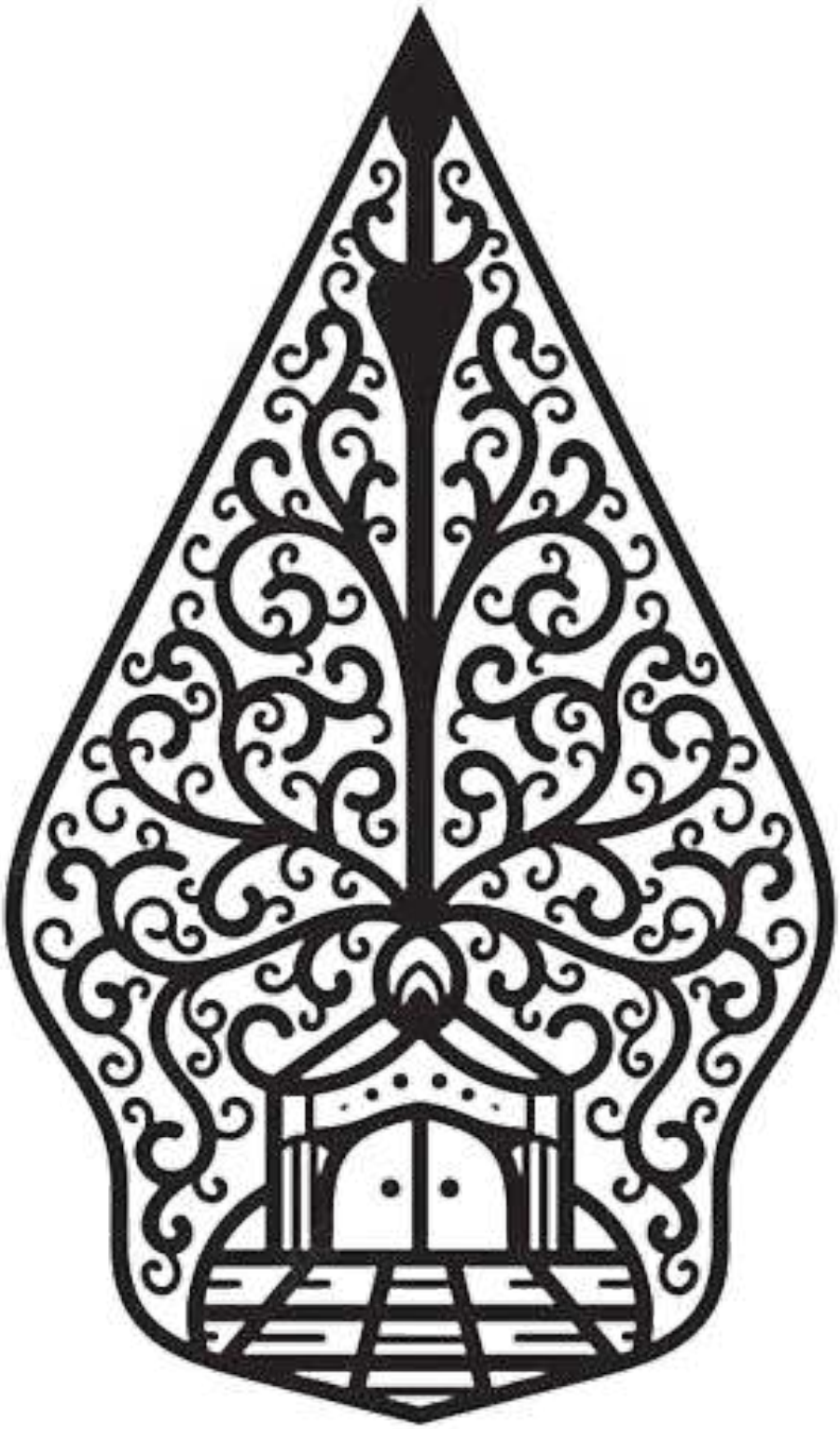
Rajamala

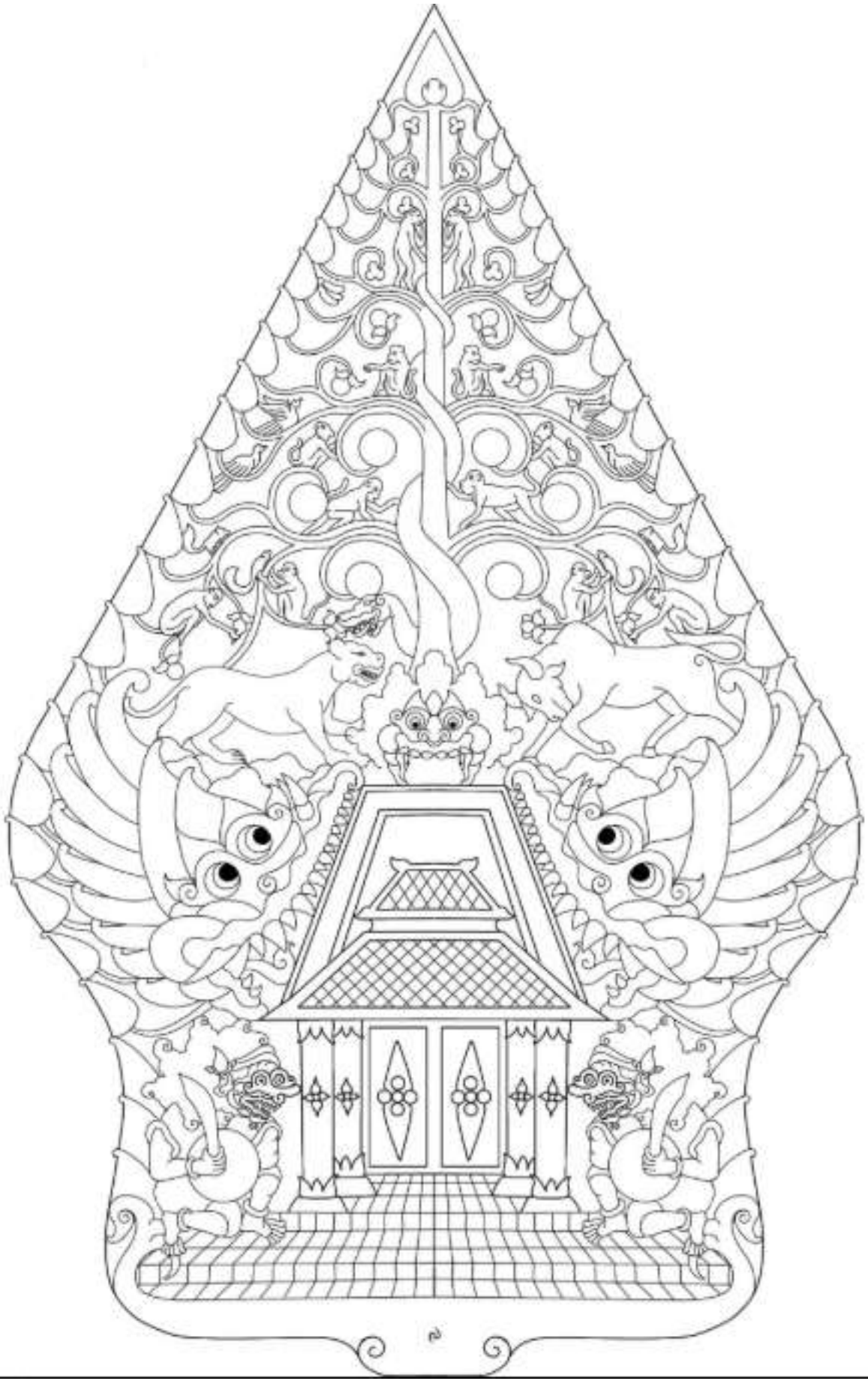


Tiwikrama









ROYAL COLLEGE OF MUSIC
London

RCM SPARKS

Wayang - Shadow Puppets

Wayang - Shadow Puppets

What is Wayang?

Wayang is a classical Javanese shadow puppet performance that can be traced back to before the 10th Century. Wayang is renowned for its elaborate and orchestrated performance and this ancient form of storytelling originated from the Indonesian island of Java.

The two most common types of puppets that feature in Wayang are three - dimensional wooden puppets called Wayang Klitik and flat leather shadow puppets called Wayang Kulit which are projected in front of a screen lit from behind.

Wayang is accompanied by gamelan musicians who provide music for the show and create the appropriate atmosphere for each scene.

Discover

Watch this helpful video to see a Wayang Puppet Theatre performance!
Task: What facts can you find out about Indonesia? How many islands are there? How many languages are spoken there?

Listen

Listen to these gamelan pieces and think about how your puppet show is going to work alongside the music.

Baris by Gong Kebyar of Peliatan

Rangsang by Gamelan Wayang Sasak

What atmosphere does the music create?

Is there a clear beginning and end?

Are there any changes in tempo or dynamics that may affect your story?

Get Creative

Use the template and instructions provided to create you own Wayang shadow puppet. To create your shadow puppets you will need:

- A template
- Card
- Hole punch
- Paper Fasteners/Split Pins
- Lolly Sticks/Coffee Stirrers

You may wish to decorate your puppet using:

- Felt tip pens
- Paints
- String

Remember: The most common colours featured in Wayang are Black, Gold, Red and White. Black and White are used to show the characters body. Gold and Red are used to represent jewellry and costume.

To create your shadow theatre you will need:

- A white cloth or large sheet of paper or a plain wall
- A torch or a lamp

Listen back to the gamelan pieces included in this resource or the music you created as a class and think about a story that could accompany these pieces.

Where is your story set?
What type of characters are involved?
How many characters are there?
How does the music support your story?
How does your story begin? How does it end?

Perform

Once you have created your puppets and developed your story, perform your show alongside the gamelan pieces you have listened to or the piece you have created. Film the results to show to friends, family or the rest of your class.